(a) the number of pending freedom fighter pension cases from Pondicherry;

(b) what steps are being taken for speedy clearance of the cases; and

(c) whether it is a fact that-even after the orders have been passed by the High Court of Madras to give pension, the same has not been granted?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI CH. VIDYASAGAR RAO): (a) and (b) No case complete in all respects and eligible for Samman pension, duly verified and recommended by the Government of Pondicherry, is pending.

(c) Orders passed by the Courts are complied with unless there are good grounds for filing appeals there against.

Blast in Srinagar

635. SHRI JIBON ROY: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there was a devastating blast in the vegetable market at Srinagar on 3rd January, 2000;

(b) if so, the details of the blast and the number of casualties in the blast;

(c) whether Government have found any security lapse in the case; and;

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI CH. VIDYASAGAR RAO): (a) and (b) On 3rd January, 2000 around 1000 hours militants caused an explosion at Sabzi Mandi, Batmaloo, Srinagar when a large number of people were purchasing vegetables at the Sabzi Mandi. Due to the explosion 15 persons including some security personnel died.

(c) No. Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Terrorist Infiltration from Nepal

636. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the infiltration of terrorists from Nepal have increased during the past few years;

(b) if so, whether there, is urgent need to fence the Indo-Nepal border to check infiltration;

(c) the total length in Kilometers of Indo-Nepal border; and

(d) the time by which fencing along Indo-Nepal border would commence and be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI CH. VIDYASAGAR RAO): (a) to (d) The 1,751 Kms. Long Indo-Nepal border has historically been an open border with a visa-free travel regime. There have been instances in recent years of misuse of this open border for staging terrorist activities directed against India. In view of these developments, the concerned agencies of His Majesty's Government of Nepal and the Government of India have remained in regular touch, both directly and through the bi-lateral institutional mechanisms, such as the Joint Working Group on Border Management and Home Secretary level talks. As a result of cooperation between the two countries, many terrorist conspiracies sponsored by under-cover intelligence operatives based in Pakistan embassy in Kathmandu have been neutralised.

In view of the friendly relations between the two countries and extensive trans-border linkages of the local population on both sides, it may not be desirable to change the nature of this border by erecting fencing along this border. An Action Plan has been prepared in consultation with concerned States to strengthen policing and intelligence collection along this border, including patrolling of vulnerable stretches.

Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir

637. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of HOMEAFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it a fact that terrorists released in exchange of the hijacked plane were kept in jail without trail and conviction; if so, the reasons therefor;

(b) whether those terrorists are active in Jammu and Kashmir; and

(c) if so, the special strategy adopted by Government to meet the challenge?